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CONTRIBUTORS:

A. VERNON HARCOURT.....Oxford, England.
HENRY B. WHEATLEY.....London.
MRS. M. E. HAWES.....Author of "Art of Decoration," London.
ROBERT W. EDIS.....{ Author of "Decoration and
Furnishing of Town Houses," London.
GILBERT R. REDGRAVE.....{ Secretary, Technical Commission
of Great Britain.....London.
F. EDWARD HULME.....Author "Principles of Ornamental Art," London.
LUTHER HOOPER.....London.
LEWIS F. DAY.....London.
W. CAVE THOMAS.....London.
THEODORE CHILD.....Paris.
FRANKLIN B. HOUGH.....Chief of Forestry Division, Washington.
FRANK T. ROBINSON.....Art Editor, Boston Transcript, Boston.
RALPH A. CRAM....."
GEO. CURTIS WRIGHT.....New York City.
MISS MARY GAY HUMPHREY....."
And many others.

ARTISTS:

HENRY SHAW.....London.
E. W. POLEY.....London.
THE CHARCOAL CLUB.....New York City.
JNO. W. H. WATTS.....Ottawa, Canada.
GEORGE R. HALK.....New York City.
J. W. BUSS.....Providence, R.I.
GOULD & ANGELL....."
JAMES THOMSON.....Boston, Mass.
EDWARD DEWSON....."
S. N. SMALL....."
CHARLES VOLEMAR.....New York City.
FRANK BELLEW....."
RAFAEL GU-STAVINO....."
W. P. HOOPER....."
And many others.

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"TASTE" is one of the peculiarities of modern thought as difficult to understand as the limits of futurity. We can neither measure, weigh nor bound it; we cannot define it; we cannot control it, and it is not difficult to believe that we cannot cater to it. Numbers of friends say that our paper has struck the right key; some say that it is too high, and finally comes the inevitable "crank," who declares that our "taste" is "simply wretched, too awfully common, you know"; and he has got a design for a mantel, "a regular esthetic design," that will just place the "taste" of our patrons "on the proper plane, you know"; and, oh! what a design, we could fancy the spirit eyes of our departed friends, Boule and Talbert and those common people, gazing with wonder on such a guide and lesson for "taste"; and the crank walked off with his design, fully satisfied, no doubt, even as we are, that there is no accounting for "taste."

FOLLOWING up this moralizing strain upon the varieties and phases of taste, we might call to task some of the writers of "art" books and decorative essays, who deprecate the employment of professional artists to aid in the adornment of one's house. So far as the question of economy, and possibly increased interest in the result are concerned, there is no doubt that the amateur decorator has the advantage, but to make such treatment effective it must be accompanied with a certain amount of judgment and a genuine taste, not a distinctive one only, and this every one does not possess. It is pleasurable to have one's room carry the impress of the occupants artistic character or peculiarities, but if that character is lacking in judgment, and those peculiarities are not governed by a well ordered mind, the result is far from satisfactory. There are many persons who admire a properly arranged apartment and are pleased with a nicely decorated wall, and yet they do not possess the ability of placing their own, perhaps more costly furnishings, in the most effective positions, and they are aware of this deficiency and are glad to make use of the talents of a professional to add to their own comfort and pleasure.

In urging the abolition of professional decorators, there should be some rule given by which good taste may be acquired, on demand, by every one, and this provision is not made by those reform writers to whom our article refers.

LARGE FACTORIES.

WE note the frequent remarks concerning the decay and disappearance of small producers or manufacturers. Not many years ago, the wants of the community were well filled by small workshops, in which the artisan, by tedious hand labor, produced the desired articles, weaving into his work such skill of design and of workmanship as the purchaser may have cared to pay for. The growing demand for all articles consequent upon the increasing wealth and more luxurious ideas of the multitude, as well as the development of new ideas and possibilities in machinery, naturally overran the facilities and producing power of these old-fashioned workshops, and one by one, at first, and then more rapidly, until finally by whole communities, they have disappeared.

It is lamented, in most lugubrious tones, by some, that this decadence of the small workshop has rendered the production of the old-fashioned "solid" work almost impossible, but it is forgotten by such bewailers, that the people of the past century would have considered it a wicked piece of extravagance to own more than two suits of clothes or one silk dress, or to change a suit of furniture because a whim, or new surroundings, made a change desirable. It would, indeed, be a startling proposition to the present age if we were invited to seriously consider the idea of buying, in our first outfit, only such furniture as would serve us the remainder of our lives. Having, then, the enlarged ideas as to the use, and the disuse at certain stages, of furniture, it is hardly necessary to consider the desirability of the "old-fashioned solid work" made to outlast time.

With this growth of new ideas and new wants there has been constantly recurring changes in the facilities of production, all looking toward more rapidity and decreased expense of manufacture. The gradual evolutions of the processes of manufacture from the one man shop, through the larger aggregations of men and tools, to the still larger masses of men and machinery of all kinds, has been witnessed, in all its stages by the living generation, and is certainly one of the marvellous signs of the increasing luxuriousness of the people. When the demands for articles that but a few years ago were looked upon as luxuries, render the erection of such immense concerns as some of our modern furniture factories a necessity, it is not surprising that our grand-parents, who look back upon the ancient days and methods, give vent to many a fear that the times are out of joint and good furniture a thing of the past.

Such ideas are, however, very far from the truth; while we do not require, and do not care, for the "solid" work of the past centuries, and while it may be true that such work is not now produced by the present methods, it is also true that what is made is quite as good, quite as useful, much more ornamental and infinitely superior to the old in many conveniences. Nor is it true that the large aggregations of men and of labor-saving machinery serve to deteriorate the quality of the production. Given the same amount of money as in the olden times, and our large factories will supply articles superior in every way. Why should it not be so? Every turn of man's hand, or of wheel and machine, is keenly watched in order to improve the producing power and thus lessen cost, and such constant supervision of ways and means cannot fail to benefit the buyer; and it is a fact, that, with the gradual gathering of production into the hands of large factories there has come lower prices, and a better class of furniture is now within reach of the masses than ever before. We do not share the fears so frequently expressed that the tendency is constantly towards cheapness only, without regard to quality.